

**Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee Forest Plan Revision
Public Information Webinar
September 1, 2011
12:00 – 1:30 p.m.**

Attendees:

Forty-four members of the public participated in the webinar.

Meeting Purpose and Overview

The USDS Forest Service (Forest Service) hosted a public information webinar for the Colville and Okanogan National Forest Plan Revision on September 1, 2011. The webinar provided the public an opportunity to learn about the Forest Service's proposals for long-term management of the Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests, how they can comment on the proposals, how their comments will be used, and future opportunities for their involvement. Participants received an overview presentation on the Proposed Actions for revising the Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest plans, and had an opportunity to ask questions.

Meeting Agenda

Susan Hayman, EnviroIssues facilitator, welcomed everyone and provided an overview of the agenda. She noted that participants can access more project-related information online.

Presentation

Margaret Hartzell, Team leader, presented the key concepts of the Proposed Actions. She explained that she would discuss proposed actions for both the Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests, with a slight emphasis on the Colville National Forest for the first webinar (and likewise for the Okanogan-Wenatchee at the second webinar). She provided a general overview; a process timeline; and *new* and *continued* goals of the Proposed Actions for the following categories:

- Aquatics and riparian systems
- Plants
- Vegetation
- Wildlife habitat
- Access
- Livestock grazing
- Recreation
- Renewable forest products
- Scenery
- Preliminary Wilderness recommendations

Margaret also explained the “tools” the plan uses, as well as how comments are being gathered and used in the process. Please see Attachment 1 for the presentation slides.

Questions & Responses

The following is a synopsis of questions (Q) / comments (C) and corresponding responses (R) from the webinar.

Q: Will the forest plan dictate what is or is not possible in the travel management plan?

R: The Colville National Forest has completed the first round of travel management planning and published a Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM). This map will be used in the process of revising the forest plan. The Okanogan-Wenatchee is in the middle of the first phase of travel planning, and does not have a MVUM yet. However, the Travel Management and Forest Plan Revision teams, are working together to provide consistent direction in the forest plan and travel management plan.

Q: I am concerned about the removal of vegetation as an energy resource (biomass). I see this as an unnecessary and harmful extraction of plant nutrients and biological material. What is the Forest Service policy regarding this practice?

R: We will have standards in the revised forest plan for how much biomass we need to leave on-site. There are fire-related concerns about leaving excessive amounts on the ground; heavy fuels on the ground may create sterilized soil if burned, which can be worse than not having any biomass on the ground. We want to maintain productivity and habitat. Anything beyond that, we need to be able to remove. The use of that material as fuel is up to existing markets.

Q: Are you recommending the area around the Kettle Crest Trail for Wilderness? If so, what factors led you to recommend it, and are you at all concerned about closing the trail to bikes as a result?

R: We looked really hard at the Kettle Crest Trail. Some portions of it are recommended for Wilderness; some portions are not. There are definitely some trade-offs – one of those being mountain biking use. Looking at the map, you can see that the very southern portion of the Profanity Wilderness Area and the northernmost portion of the Bald Snow potential Wilderness area are not being recommended. Both provide mountain bike use areas, but there are trade-offs related to Wilderness consideration.

C: Following up with the Forest Service’s comment about “having the most to offer” in terms of the Kettle Crest. I am trying to understand what the reasons are for why the Forest Service does not want to let that trail remain as a “thru-trail” for bikes.

R: There's a process we go through for those types of evaluations. There are six different factors we look at related to the "need" side of the question. A lot of those hinge around recreation, and some of them hinge around habitat and providing underrepresented ecosystems and landforms in the area. Relative to the Colville, only 3% of the Colville National Forest is in Wilderness. From looking at it from a perspective of landforms and underrepresented ecosystems, there would be a need to provide more Wilderness on the Colville National Forest. The Kettle Crest is one of the key-most places we could do that. We consider if it contributes important habitat and for rare plants. Additionally, the Colville National Forest would provide much-needed Wilderness to nearby Spokane – a major population center.

C: I see your point about the underrepresented ecosystems and Wilderness close to Spokane. It is a popular area right now for people from Spokane and Seattle – and bike riding is definitely growing – and I think it's starting to have an influence on those nearby communities. So, as an economic driver and as a recreational asset, it's definitely a trail that has a great future; but I see the challenge of sorting out where the Wilderness should go.

Q: The Proposed Actions would remove the strong Late Successional Reserve (LSR) protection offered under the Northwest Forest Plan. How does the Forest Service plan to maintain the high level of protection that these LSR areas have benefited from since the passage of the Northwest Forest Plan?

R: Those areas were created by the Northwest Forest Plan decision in 1994 and provide habitat for Northern Spotted Owls and other species that have habitats in late successional stands – old growth structure, etc. The revised forest plan offers guidance on what needs to be done to continue to provide habitat for Northern Spotted Owls. There are specifics written into the wildlife section of the Proposed Actions that talk about percentages of habitat that should be in a certain condition. We feel that we could provide good habitat for Northern Spotted Owl if we step away from the reserve system and recognize that it is a dynamic system and habitat can shift and move over time on the forest.

In addition, the recently revised spotted owl conservation strategy also mentions this dynamic on the landscape – suggesting that we protect existing habitat and develop future potential habitat, realizing that these reserves can die out and that we need to be planning for the future as well as the dynamic of the landscape.

Q: What will you do with the public comments?

R: We will likely get hundreds of comments. We will perform an analysis of specific, substantive comments. This analysis will help us identify the parts of the Proposed Action that people disagree with; tell us we need to do something different than we currently have; etc. From that information, we start to build the alternative ways we could manage the forest; these

alternatives will appear in the draft Environmental Impact Statement. It has descriptions of those alternative ways and the impacts that would likely happen if implemented.

Q: Why isn't the Travel Management Plan under the forest plan? Shouldn't trails be listed in the plan and their intended use?

R: The focus is different. Travel Management talks about individual trails and roads. The forest plan, however, was never intended to talk about or make decisions about individual trails or roads; it's a broad, strategic large landscape view of how the national forest would be managed.

Q: The draft Northern Spotted Owl recovery plan was reviewed by scientists and heavily criticized as not using the best-available science. How is the Forest Service going to guarantee – given the level of scientific uncertainty – that we are going to see at least an equivalent – if not stronger – level of protection, which is what the owl plan actually calls for.

R: The draft recovery plan that you are referring received a lot of review. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wrote and published the plan, then revised and re-released the final version around June 30 of this year. In the final Northern Spotted Owl recovery plan, they concluded that reserve strategies do not work well with the conditions on the east side of the Cascades (e.g. high fire return intervals). A reserve strategy is subject to areas where we can lose habitat.

Additionally, our forest plan serves as an umbrella where we specify certain structural stages within a dynamic landscape. As we get into more site-specific, project level work, we can tailor that along with our analysis of fire flow and other factors to help protect spotted owls.

C: There is a lot of concern on this issue. Again, I think that the science is not out there to show that thinning actually benefits populations, so we're very concerned about proposals that would weaken protection of the late successional reserves – not just for owls – but for roads densities, and some of the other management standards that come with the late successional reserves.

R: We appreciate your concern. The Wildlife section of the Proposed Actions explains our proposal to manage the Northern Spotted Owl. It also It also speaks to road densities there. Additionally, the vegetation section emphasizes the need to provide for late successional structure.

Q: <written> What is recreational grazing, and how is that different from commercial grazing?

R: Commercial grazing refers to cattle – and occasionally sheep – that are permitted to graze on the forest as part of a commercial ranching operation. Commercial grazing is managed through an allotment system, which allows a permittee to bring on a certain number of cattle or sheep per year. Recreational grazing refers to the grazing done by pack stock or riding stock that people bring onto the forest as part of recreational activities. We provide direction in the forest plan for how to manage the grazing for recreational stock.

Q: You referred to improvements in boundary locations as a reason for some of the Wilderness area recommendations. Can you expand on your objectives and how the potential Wilderness areas will improve your ability to meet them?

R: There is a lot of complexity to choosing good Wilderness boundaries. Some landscape features (e.g., ridgelines or stream) make for a good boundary; whereas a mid-slope boundary can be difficult to locate on the ground. Also, we have a policy where we are allowed to consider allowing naturally occurring fire to burn on the landscape, but where we have mid-slope boundaries, fires won't be able to do that; they either need to burn up to the ridgeline or down to the creek. So, being able to move the boundary to a landscape feature is really helpful. Also, redefining boundary lines to encompass trails entirely will help improve the continuity of Wilderness management.

Q: Are there any changes proposed to forest-wide and Management Area specific standards and guidelines for both forest plans?

R: Yes, there will be some changes to standards and guidelines. One of the changes is discussed in the congressionally-designated Wilderness section where we talk about vegetation loss. Another example where we're making a change in standards and guidelines has to do with the width of the riparian buffers along streams, lakes, etc. We are actually making those buffers wider. We aren't proposing a large number of changes to standards and guidelines; but there are a few we feel need to be changed.

Q: If LSRs are removed, what will protect old growth trees from being included in the timber harvest?

R: The forest plans will include a landscape-scale description of specific amounts of vegetation types, and the amount of both mature and old forest, that need to be on that landscape. As we move into particular habitat within a specific area, we will have a minimum floor of old growth structure to try to maintain that old forest component on the landscape. For more information, look at the subsection about biological legacy within the vegetation section.

Q: The Proposed Action forecasts a 350% increase in snowmobile use on the forest and yet the forest plan does not seem to do any kind of winter recreational management for

snowmobiles. Considering the different technology changes for snowmobiles over the life of this forest plan, why isn't winter motorized recreation being managed?

R: We do talk about motorized winter recreation use and management on both the Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee. In the direction for Management Areas, we say that winter motorized use could continue to be authorized under our Proposed Actions for almost all of the Management Areas on the forest, with the exception of congressionally-designated Wilderness areas; Research Natural Areas; and National Scenic Trails. There are also other places in the forest plan that talk about winter motorized use – in the wildlife section, where we give some direction that we operate under right now, and will continue with, and that puts some limitations on winter motorized use in the interest of providing good habitats conditions for certain species out there.

We are proposing to add five new non-motorized areas across the Wenatchee Forest portion over the life of the plan in recognition of the fact that there's not a lot of non-motorized recreation area nearby in winter. Also, there are some areas that are extremely popular for backcountry snowmobiling which we chose not to propose for Wilderness recommendation.

Q: You stated preliminary Wilderness recommendations were not contiguous. Thus, they were scattered. Doesn't this create incredible boundary problems – knowing when you're in or out; buffering from non-Wilderness, etc.?

R: We are proposing non-contiguous areas where we have an adjacent existing Wilderness. For example, the Alpine Lakes Wilderness area that has lots of separate parcels attached to the outside of the boundary that we considered individually. So, we proposed adding some of those – and not others – but they were all to an existing Wilderness – so they would become part of a continuous area if designated.

Q: Will there be a social and economic analysis of the effects from the preliminary administratively recommended Wilderness?

R: Yes. It comes with the draft Environmental Impact Statement, which is scheduled for release next summer or fall.

Q: Kittitas County Forest Service had 70% of their summer trail crews cut this last couple of years. How are these trails being maintained?

R: This is not something that the forest plan revision would address. Declining budgets have affected the work force and the amount of work we can accomplish every year on the forest. We really appreciate when our wonderful volunteers help us out by doing trail maintenance.

[Susan suggested that the author of that question might want to check in with their local Forest Service to see if they might be able to help.]

Q: Is the Backcountry-Motorized Management Area definition useful, and can it be applied as an alternative to Wilderness designation to limit road creation and mining uses?

R: This is a Management Area where there currently aren't any roads, and we would continue to manage the area that way. We would allow summer motorized use on designate motorized trails in those areas. In fact, some of them already have motorized trails. I think the question is if we could change an area we are currently recommending for Wilderness and designate it instead as a Backcountry-Motorized Management Area. The answer to that is yes. We can explore that as an alternative through the Proposed Actions. We would be interested if there are areas of preliminary recommended Wilderness that you would like to see us consider for a Backcountry-Motorized Management Area.

Q: Does the Forest Service have any plans to inventory the carbon storage in the forest to mitigate the impacts of climate change?

R: There's a lot of interest nationwide about the contribution of national forests to carbon storage and the link to climate change. At this point, the Forest Service is taking a national approach to looking at the potential for carbon storage. We haven't started to look at that on a forest-by-forest basis. So, at this point, no; we are not going to be doing any analysis on the individual forest level around carbon storage – only at a national level for the national forests.

We do have an inventory system to monitor carbon. It's called the forest inventory and analysis system. We have a series of plots that about a mile and a half apart scattered over the entire forest. Those are monitored on a ten year basis, and carbon is one of the things that they are measuring on those plots.

Q: How will the Forest Service manage the trees that have been killed by spruce bud worm and pine beetle if these lands are put into Wilderness?

R: The likelihood of actively managing these areas is fairly remote. We believe the Wilderness Act allows the use of prescribed fire for specific reasons in Wilderness. One of the things we are proposing with the revised forest plan is to give ourselves the permission to use that as a tool in the future when it is appropriate.

The Wilderness Act itself specifically allows for the treatment of insect and disease in Wilderness. But, the flip side, is it's something we rarely do, especially if the insect or disease is native and acting in a natural manner. It's the type of thing we want to allow for in Wilderness – natural processes helping to shape the landscape.

Closing

Susan thanked everyone for participating and encouraged everyone to get their comments into the Forest Service by September 28. She noted that the summary notes from the conversation would be posted on the Forest Service website as they are available.

Margaret thanked everyone for their participation, and expressed her gratitude for the participants' thorough consideration of the proposed plan and for asking great questions. She also encouraged everyone to continue to be involved in the plan revision.

The webinar ended at 1:30 p.m.

A list of Forest Service Staff and Facilitation Team participants is included in Attachment 2.

Attachment 1: Presentation slides

WELCOME!

COLVILLE AND OKANOGAN-WENATCHEE NATIONAL FOREST PLAN REVISION INFORMATION WEBINAR

Welcome to the webinar! We will begin at 12:00 p.m. Please stand by while we wait for others to join. While waiting...

1. Be sure to enter your audio PIN so that you can participate in the discussion.
2. You will remain muted until called upon.
3. Experiencing technical difficulties? Please call Melissa at 208-869-2120.

September 1, 2011 Forest Plan Revision

Welcome

- Webinar logistics
 - Raising your hand
 - Asking questions
 - For technical support, call Melissa at 208-869-2120
- For more information
 - [http:// www.fs.usda.gov/goto/okawen/plan-revision](http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/okawen/plan-revision)
- Introductions

September 1, 2011

Webinar Purpose

- To provide an opportunity for you to learn about the Forest Service proposals for long-term management of the Colville and Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forests.
- To provide information on how you can comment on the proposals, how your comments will be used, and to learn about future opportunities for your involvement.

September 1, 2011

Agenda

- 12:00 p.m. Welcome, Introductions, Overview
- 12:10 p.m. Informational Presentation
- 12:40 p.m. Questions and Responses
- 1:25 p.m. How to Comment / Next steps
- 1:30 p.m. Adjourn

September 1, 2011

Informational Presentation

Margaret Hartzell,
Forest Plan Revision Team Leader

September 1, 2011

Why you should be involved

- Forest Plan Revision – Proposed Action public involvement
- June 30 to **September 28**, 2011

"Sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forest and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations."
- Forest Service Mission

September 1, 2011

Attachment 1: Presentation slides

What Plans Do...

- Describes desired
 - Habitat for wildlife, aquatic species, and plants
 - Vegetation (trees, shrubs, range lands)
- Identifies areas suited for kinds of travel
 - On foot, motorized, or mechanized
- Recommend wilderness, determine eligibility of wild and scenic rivers
- Provide sideboards for projects
 - Standards and guidelines

September 1, 2011

Plan Revision – the basics

- Managing expectations
- Bring current plan up-to-date as required by NFMA
- Cannot make changes to laws, regulations, the directives, policy



Umbrella
Operating framework for Forest

September 1, 2011

Time Line

- This summer – Proposed Action
- Summer 2012 – DEIS
- Summer 2013 – FEIS
- Fall 2013 – revised forest plan



September 1, 2011

Proposed Action

- Aquatics and Riparian Systems
 - New – Key watersheds
 - Continuing – good water quality, riparian buffers, healthy riparian ecosystems



September 1, 2011

Proposed Action

- Plants
 - Continue – preventing introduction and spread of invasive plants
 - Using native plants
 - Protecting unique habitats, rare plants, ESA species
 - Have healthy ecosystems



September 1, 2011

Proposed Action

- Vegetation
 - New – role of disturbance in ecosystem; data on composition, structure, and spatial patterns
 - Continue – focus on ecosystem restoration and forest health, managing wildfire risks, contributing habitat



September 1, 2011

Attachment 1: Presentation slides

Proposed Action

Wildlife Habitat

- New — science to better describe habitat condition, Endangered Species Act (ESA) species
- Continue — high quality habitat, connectivity, and contributing to recovery of ESA species



September 1, 2011



Proposed Action

Access — roads and trails, docks and bridges

- Continue — safe, affordable, environmentally sound system of roads and trails
- Continue — range of recreational trails
- NOTE on the Travel Management process



September 1, 2011

Proposed Action

Livestock Grazing

- Continue — range lands in good condition.



September 1, 2011

Proposed Action

Recreation

- New — additional data on recreation trends and use specific to Forest
- Continue — offer quality, nature-based recreation in outdoor setting



September 1, 2011

Proposed Action

Renewable Forest Products

- Special forest products, merchantable wood products
- Continue — provide firewood, saw timber, biomass, wood fiber
- Average annual timber harvest
 - Approximately 10,000 acres/year/forest
 - Colville: 25 to 35 million board feet
 - Okanogan-Wenatchee: 48 to 52 million board feet



September 1, 2011

Proposed Action

Scenery

- New — system that emphasizes actively managing to enhance and maintain
- Continue — provide beautiful scenery



September 1, 2011

Attachment 1: Presentation slides

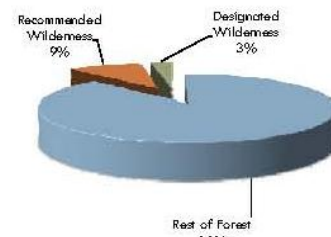
Proposed Action

- **Colville Preliminary Wilderness Recommendation**
 - Continue – Salmo-Priest Wilderness – 29,000 acres
 - New – preliminary recommendation of 101,000 acres.
 - Not final decision, existing uses can continue until Congress acts
 - Did not recommend areas with motorized trails, mining operations, wildland urban interface with dry forest, tools needed, not high quality



September 1, 2011

Colville NF



Percent of total Forest acres

September 1, 2011

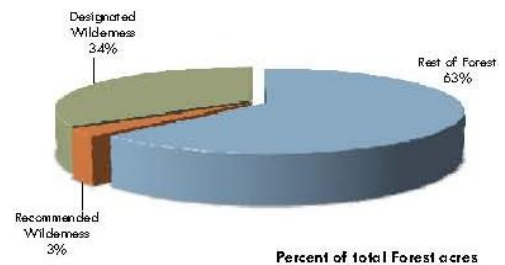
Proposed Action

- **Okanogan-Wenatchee Preliminary Wilderness Recommendation**
 - Continue – Designated Wilderness – 1,470,000 acres
 - New – preliminary recommendation of 125,800 acres.
 - Not final decision, existing uses can continue until Congress acts
 - Did not recommend areas with motorized trails, mining operations, wildland urban interface with dry forest, tools needed, not high quality



September 1, 2011

Okanogan-Wenatchee NF



Percent of total Forest acres

September 1, 2011

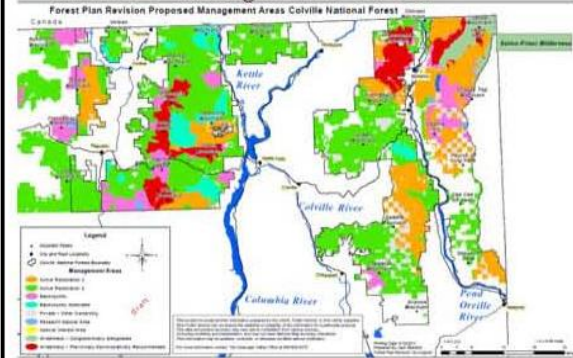
Proposed Action

- **Tool the plan uses - Management Areas**
 - Consistent with neighbors
 - Habitats move
 - New congressionally created trail – Pacific Northwest National Scenic



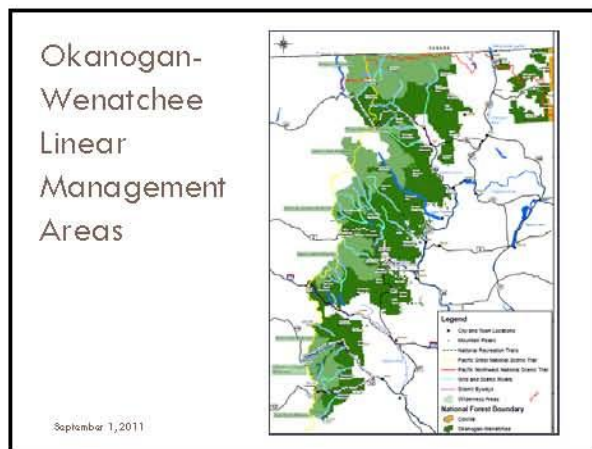
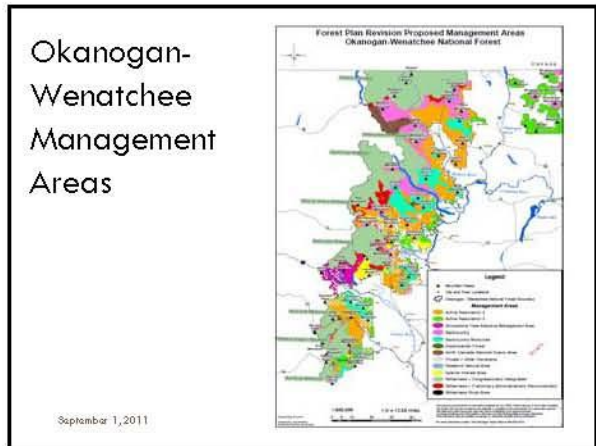
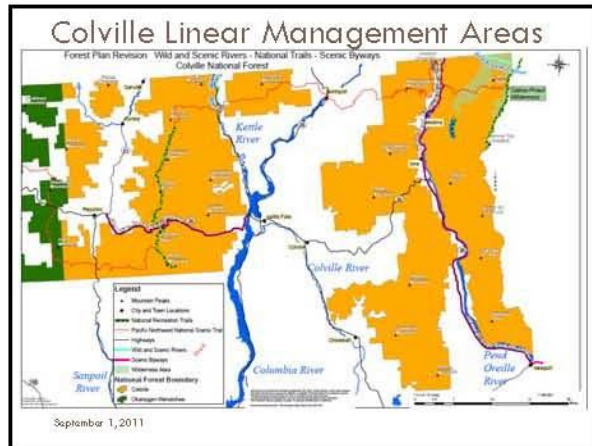
September 1, 2011

Colville Management Areas



September 1, 2011

Attachment 1: Presentation slides



Thank you for participating today!

- Send comments to:
Forest Plan Revision
Okanogan Valley Office
1240 Second Avenue South
Okanogan, WA 98840
- Email: ro_ewzplanrevision@fs.fed.us
- Website: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/goto/okawen/plan-revision>

Comments are most helpful if received by **September 28, 2011**.

September 1, 2011

Attachment 2: List of Forest Service Staff and Facilitation Team Participants

Forest Service Staff

Name	Forest	City, State
Rod Clausnitzer	Okanogan-Wenatchee	Okanogan, WA
Margaret Hartzell	Okanogan-Wenatchee	Okanogan, WA
Debbie Kelly	Okanogan-Wenatchee	Okanogan, WA
Mark Loewen	Okanogan-Wenatchee	Wenatchee, , WA
Lisa Therrell	Okanogan-Wenatchee	Leavenworth, , WA

Facilitation Team

Name	Affiliation	City, State
Caylen Beaty	EnviroIssues ¹	Seattle, WA
Susan Hayman	EnviroIssues	Boise, ID
Melissa Thom	EnviroIssues	Boise, ID

¹ Neutral public process outreach and facilitation company (www.enviroissues.com) working under the auspices of the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (www.ecr.gov).